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ABSTRACT

This study sought to describe how first-year teachers perceived ways in which they had changed during the school year. Subjects of the research were 13 first-year teachers at the elementary, junior and senior high school levels. Data were gathered during two structured, tape-recorded interviews: one between mid-March and mid-April, and the second at the close of the school year in June. These two interviews were the fourth and fifth respectively in a series of five such structured interviews which began before the first day of classes of the school year. Four topics were explored: (1) first year teachers' perceptions of changes in relationships with others in the work environment; (2) perceptions of changes in planning and organization for instruction, and in the instruction process itself; (3) perceptions of changes in ability to tolerate and respond to student misbehavior; and (4) perceptions of changes in ability to succeed as a teacher. Descriptions are given of the gradual changes of attitudes on these topics as expressed by the teachers over the period of their first teaching year. Their responses become more similar toward the end of the year, and reflected growing confidence in their ability to teach. (JD)

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FIRST YEAR TEACHERS: PERCEPTIONS OF CHANGES

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First Year Teachers: Perceptions of Changes

Introduction

The first year of teaching is, for beginning teachers, a series of encounters with their unique position as newcomers. First year teachers are faced with a variety of new experiences and unfamiliar environments. During the first year of teaching, beginners must not only know what to do, they must know how to do it. They are concerned with their own ability as teachers. While they are struggling with their personal assessment of what each situation requires, as well as assessing their ability to handle matters, beginning teachers must also contend with how they are perceived by their students, fellow teachers, and superiors. How do others think I am doing? What do others expect of me? Should I ask questions? Should I keep my thoughts to myself?

The personal lives of first year teachers are also crowded with significant changes and potentially troubling adjustments. The secure familiarity of college life gives way to unfamiliar roles, expectations, and professional and social settings. First teaching positions may signal financial independence with its attendant responsibilities. Marriage frequently co-occurs with graduation from college and the start of the

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The present paper ~~represents an analysis of a portion of the data~~ The present paper represents an analysis of a portion of the data gathered for the First Year Teacher Study. In addition to the author of the present paper, investigators who conducted the First Year Teacher Study were: Jane Applegate, V. Randall Flora, Thomas J. Lasley, Gerald M. Mager, Katherine K. Newman, and Kevin Ryan. I would like to thank these colleagues for their kind permission to use data they gathered; and to acknowledge that without their participation in the First Year Teacher Study, the present paper would not have been possible.

first year teachers' careers. For those already married, role re-orientation may accompany changes as one partner leaves school to enter the world of work. These and other changes in first year teachers' personal lives, and the change to an unfamiliar work environment, may produce varying degrees of tension, doubt, anxiety, conflict, or stress.

There is scant empirical knowledge of the personal lives of first year teachers. This may be due in part to the nature of the subject, in that the topic may be beyond the scope of professional attention or intervention. There is limited empirical knowledge of the professional lives of first year teachers. Only recently have researchers focused on multiple views of first year teachers, their work, their work environment, and those with whom the first year teachers work. There has been limited attention given to first year teachers' perceptions of their experience as it has unfolded as the year progressed.

Literature About the First Year of Teaching

Published materials will be considered in terms of categories based on a classification proposed by Applegate, Lasley, Flora, Mager, Johnston, Newman, and Ryan (1977): (a) advice on the first year of teaching, (b) reports of first year teachers' own experiences, (c) scholarly essays on the first year of teaching, (d) reflective interpretations of first year teachers' experiences, and (e) empirical studies of the first year of teaching. Boundaries of this classification scheme are not precise, but serve to provide meaningful description of the literature (Johnston, 1978).

Advice on the first year of teaching. This group of papers represents the most frequently occurring type of literature about the first

year of teaching. Advice articles are most frequently written by those who have been first year teachers at one time, and who now write from the perspective of an experienced teacher, principal, or most frequently, school of education faculty member. Titles such as "If I Were a Beginning Teacher" (Jones, 1934), "New Teachers' First Days" (Hale, 1931), or "I'd Like to Tell That Beginning Teacher" (Brown, 1942) are common. Such advice to first year teachers is usually focused on matters of planning (McLaren, 1972; Shadick and Lilley, 1972), or most frequently on matters of discipline and classroom control (Bell, 1971; Cambier, 1965; Elrod, 1976; Peterson, 1960). Subject matter areas such as agriculture education, business education, music education, and speech education are frequently represented in advice literature.

Advice offered to first year teachers may be vague admonitions to "Be yourself" or "Don't smile until Christmas" or such advice may be extremely specific as in the admonition to have a dozen sharpened pencils on the desk in order to prevent unnecessary trips to the pencil sharpener (Hale, 1931). Applegate, et al., (1977) have noted that advice offered in one publication may contradict advice offered in another.

Advice <u>to</u> first year teachers comprises the largest portion of this category. Advice <u>about</u> first year teachers is also frequently represented. These articles on the "care and feeding" of first year teachers are usually written by college faculty or school administrative personnel and directed to other principals and supervisors (Abraham, 1954; Brown, 1977, Koontz, 1967; Lee, 1940; Smith, 1931, Wofford, 1931). These papers suggest ways that supervisory personnel can assist first year teachers, and problems for which principals and supervisors should be on the lookout.

Reports of first year teachers' experiences. First person reports by beginning teachers in the process of their first year comprise this category (Ellis, 1939; Grinnell, 1940; Hall, 1970; Leiberman, 1975; Rost, 1939). Examination of the frequency of occurrence of these diairies and reports suggests that every few years one journal or another will feature a symposium of accounts of first year teachers' experiences. These are usually straightforward accounts of unexpected experiences, problem encountered, satisfactions, often ending with a stirring reaffirmation of commitment to a life-long teaching career. These accounts are usually positive, some bordering on Pollyana-like prattle. Only one account with an overall negative tone was encountered in the periodical literature. Reports in this category are characterized by their lack of interpretation or commentary.

Scholarly essays on the first year of teaching. Carefully reasoned explanations of experiences of first year teachers, and thoughtful commentaries on the first year of teaching comprise the third category. These papers, written by teacher educators, address topics and issues such as anxiety (Jersild, 1966), early career experiences (Bush, 1965), socialization (Jackson, 1974), survival (Ryan, 1974) and induction (Rehage, 1968). The focus of these essays is not first-hand reports of first year teachers, but rather on significant aspects of the first year teaching experience.

Scholarly interpretation of first year teachers' experiences. Sources in this group represent accounts of first year teachers combined with scholarly, discipline-based interpretations. Ryan (1970) includes

accounts of three inner-city and three suburban first year teachers followed by an interpretive essay. Fuchs (1969) and Eddy (1969) bring an anthropological perspective to narratives of self-reports of first year teachers. Ryan, Newman, Mager, Applegate, Lasley, Flora, and Johnston (in press) offer accounts of first year teachers' lives from objective and subjective perspectives. These accounts provide useful indicators of the range of experiences in first year teachers' lives and their responses to these experiences.

Empirical studies of the first year of teaching. There are many empirical studies of the first year of teaching. Most, however, are limited in scope, poorly conceived and executed. Quantitative studies of the problems of first year teachers are most frequent. Most of these problem studies are limited in methodological scope, frequently relying on surveys of teachers' problems from lists supplied by principals or supervisors.

There have been descriptive surveys of first year teachers' reasons for failure (Barr and Rudisill, 1930), surveys of classroom difficulties of first year teachers (Diamon, 1948; Johnson and Umstattd, 1932; Wey, 1951). Descriptive surveys of various problems of first year teachers have been done by Bauer (1958), Eliassen (1932), Hobstetter (1937), McGill (1948), and Sheppard (1951). Stout (1952) surveyed deficiencies of first year teachers. Whitman (1966) examined fears of first year teachers.

There are relatively few correlational studies of the first year of teaching. Bell (1954) examined problems of first year teachers in relation to the pre-service teacher education programs. Bledsoe and Lightsey

(1966) examined the relationship between career perceptions of first year teachers and their certification status. Cohen and Brower (1967) studied adaptive potential of first year teachers and ratings of their teaching success.

Muskowitz and Hayman (1974, 1976) have done creative and well-designed experimental studies examining differences between experienced teachers' and beginning teachers' instructional and classroom management strategies. It is an interesting commentary that there were only two studies with experimental design found in a random sample of 50 percent of the periodical literature about first year teachers in the last five decades (Johnston, 1978).

The balance of quantitative emperical reports about the first year of teaching are descriptions of programs designed to facilitate the induction of first year teachers into the profession (Collea, 1975; Hockstad, 1966; Noda, 1968; and Peterson, 1971). Program descriptions and documents which are parts of induction programs comprise much of the literature available on microfiche through the ERIC system.

Qualitative studies of the first year of teaching are a relatively new phenomenon. A recent year-long study of the first year of teaching (The First Year Teacher Project) has sought to address some of the limitations of the current knowledge base of first year of teaching (Applegate, et al., 1977; Ryan, Applegate, Flora, Johnston, Lasley, Mager, and Newman, 1977; Ryan, et al., in press-a; Ryan, et al., in press-b). The First Year Teacher Project has employed anthropological field methods to provide an inside and outside view of the first year of teaching, in considerable depth.

The First Year Teacher Study

Since the paper presented here is a further analysis of data gathered during the First Year Teacher Study, the essential methodological features of this larger study will be reviewed, with minor revisions, from Applegate, et al., (1977).

Purpose. The purpose of the First Year Teacher Study was to describe the life-space of the first year teacher. The primary dimensions examined included: (I) the first year teacher's perceptions of himself/herself as that self is related to teaching; changes in those perceptions; (2) the first year teacher's perceptions of his/her role as a teacher; changes in those perceptions; (3) expectations for the teaching job; changes in those expectations; (4) events perceived by the first year teacher as successes and failures; changes in those perceptions; (5) perceptions and feelings about others in the school environment; (6) the nature of relationships between the first year teacher and others in the school environment; and (7) evidence that the first year teacher's perceptions, feelings and behaviors are affected by persons or ideas outside the immediate school environment.

Methodology. With the view that most of the extant studies of first year teachers are limited by time span, viewpoint, and lack of depth, the First Year Teacher Study sought to overcome these limitations.

There is, in the professional literature on education research methodology, a call for the field study approach, and some examples of it. Bronfenbrenner (1976), in advocating research in the ecology of education, proposes:

(1) That distortions of the real-life situation be kept at a minimum; that the ecological integrity of the setting be preserved. (page 22)

(2) That each participant's definition of the situation be assessed--how he or she perceives the settings and its various elements. (page 26)

In a similar vein is Lutz and Ramsey's support for the use of anthropological field methods in education (1974). They also emphasize the need to study the complete system as it exists in reality. Hypotheses must be generated from a study of actual phenomena, not from correlations of small numbers of variables.

Smith and Geoffrey (1968) set an example of a field study in a classroom, terming their approach "microethnography." They created an "inside-outside" phenomenon with Geoffrey, the teacher, as a participating observer, and Smith as a non-participating observer. With this methodology they hoped to bridge the gap between the "evils" of "good data about insignificant issues" and "abstract proverbs and maxims" which have characterized thought about education (page 20). They say theirs is a hypotheses-generating study.

Sample. The sample was obtained as follows. From lists of first year teachers contributed by cooperating school systems representing urban, suburban, and rural areas, names were selected to represent a cross-section of grade level taught, subject taught, type of school, and sex of teacher. These people were invited, via telephone, to participate in the study. If a teacher declined, another was selected with the view of maintaining the diversity of the sample. Thirty-six teachers were

contacted in order to obtain the final sample.

The final sample consisted of 18 teachers: 12 women and 6 men. In age, the teachers ranged from 22 to 45 years, but most fell into the 23-25 age group. Six taught in the elementary grades (K-5), 6 in the middle grades (6-9), and 6 at the senior high level (10-12). Fifteen of the 18 were regular classroom teachers, teaching such subjects as mathematics, physical education, and foreign languages, or such grades as kindergarten, fourth grade, and a fourth-fifth combination. Three of the 18 were special classroom teachers in career centers or EMR programs.

The 18 teachers taught in 16 different schools, representing six school systems. Three schools were in rural settings, 11 in suburban settings, and two in urban settings. Three teachers were in parochial schools, one in a private school, and 14 in public schools.

Seventeen of the 18 teachers had received baccalaureate degrees from 11 different colleges. Sixteen of the 18 had completed teacher preparation programs from nine different instituions; two were, at that time, enrolled in training programs.

Procedures. Each of the 18 first year teachers was assigned to one of the seven researchers. Teachers were formally interviewed at length during the month before school began, three or four weeks later, between November 5 and December 15, in late March or early April, and finally at the close of the school year.

The questions for the initial pre-school interview emerged from four sources:

(1) interviews of several teachers who had just completed their first year,

(2) a cursory examination of folk knowledge and professional literature,

(3) researchers introspection of their own first year experiences, and

(4) the research questions.

Questions for the second interview had an additional source--information from six classroom observations and several personal contacts with each teacher. The second and each subsequent interview could now probe areas which teachers were relating as important. As the months progressed, some of the original interview questions were dropped or altered, and others added, as priorities emerged from the teachers themselves. The teachers were observed for one hour twice a week during the first four weeks, and two to four times per month thereafter; many different times during the school day were observed. Teachers were contacted often by phone. Periodically they were asked to respond to particular instruments.

Investigators. The team of seven researchers consisted of six advanced doctoral students and one professor, all of whom had taught in either elementary or secondary schools. During the period of the study they were all working in the area of teacher education.

Despite agreement about the basic aims and methodology of the study, there were differences among the researchers. They had not been trained for reliability in observation and interviewing. Several differences were recognized and dealt with:

(1) Each had a notion of the first year of teaching based on his/her own experiences. To make these notions as explicit as possible, researchers wrote and shared reflective accounts of their

first year of teaching.

(2) Each researcher had a set of judgments about the nature of teaching and what constituted good teaching. It was probable that these notions would influence the data selected to be recorded about first year teachers. To make these judgments explicit, researchers recorded periodically their personal evaluations of each teacher.

(3) Each researcher had his/her individual manner of interacting with other people. Further, each had a somewhat different view of how much he/she should intervene in the professional lives of the first year teachers. One researcher answered the teacher's questions and occasionally gave advice when needed, while another avoided reacting overtly to what the teacher told him. In an attempt to understand the possible effects which researchers may have had on what teachers thought and did, teachers were asked periodically to write about the relationship between themselves and the researchers; their writing was held and not read by the researchers until the end of the study.

The Present Investigation: First Year Teachers' Perceptions of Changes

The first year of teaching is characterized by changes of varying magnitude to new personal and professional settings. First year teachers' perceptions of themselves and their teaching reflect their experiences and responses to the critical beginning of their teaching career.

It was the aim of the present investigation to describe first year teachers' perceptions of changes which occurred over the course of their initial professional experience. More specifically, this study sought to

describe how first year teachers perceived how they had changed during the school year. From interview data generated by open-ended questions about how they had changed, several interesting dimensions emerged.

Sample Attrition

Eighteen teachers comprised the sample of the First Year Teacher Study. Within the first weeks of school, one teacher resigned his position and left teaching. At Thanksgiving a second teacher resigned and returned to her home town, taking another teaching position, however, later in the year. The remaining 16 teachers completed the school year and continued their participation in the First Year Teacher Study. At the time of the analysis of the fourth and fifth of the five structured interviews administered during the First Year Teacher Study, data were not available for three of the remaining 16 teachers. The present investigation is based, then, on the analysis of 13 first year teachers.

Method of Analysis

Data were gathered during two structured, tape-recorded interviews: one between mid-March and mid-April, and the second at the close of the school year in early June. These two interviews were the fourth and fifth respectively in a series of five such structured interviews which began before the first day of classes of the school year. Verbatim typescripts were made for each of the interviews, 26 in all. Each typescript was searched for each instance in which the teachers indicated they had changed. Each such instance was copied onto a separate card. In order for an instance of change to be recorded, the first year teacher must have expressed his/her perceptions of present matters or conditions in relation to past matters or conditions; as in the example: "I am more

relaxed than I was in September." In this manner, 107 change statements were identified and copied onto separate cards. The total group of change statements was then examined and grouped according to the topical reference of the statements. Additional topic groupings were formed when existing dimensions were not applicable. When it became apparent that the content of topic groups were similar or overlapping, they were combined. Twelve topic groups were thus formed:

(a) relationships with students

(b) relationships with parents

(c) relationships with administrators

(d) relationships with school faculty

(e) physical stamina

(f) management of time

(g) planning and organization

(h) instruction

(i) discipline

(j) patience

(k) confidence

(l) comfort

Change statement cards comprising each of the above categories were examined and summarized in order to assess the potential richness and meaning of each topic group. Complementary groups were again combined to increase descriptive power. The following four topics emerged as particularly promising:

(a) first year teacher's perceptions of changes in his/her relationships with others in the work environment

(b) first year teacher's perceptions of changes in his/her planning and organizing for instruction, and in the instructional process itself

(c) first year teacher's perceptions of changes in his/her ability to tolerate and respond to student misbehavior

(d) first year teacher's perceptions of changes in his/her confidence in ability to succeed as a first year teacher

As used in the present study, perception is defined as consisting of (1) description; characterization (of self, role. . .), and (2) feelings about, emotional response to the description and characterization (of self, role. . .) (Applegate, et al., 1977).

Results

Others in the environment. First year teachers are a new and unknown entity for students, parents, colleagues, and administrators. Beginning teachers are strangers to the school community they enter. They bring no credible background of professional experience. They bring no reputation other than "beginner." Conversely, first year teachers begin not knowing the other people in their work setting. Beginning teachers are not familiar with names, faces, and personalities of those with whom they work. First year teachers are outsiders entering an on-going professional and social community. They enter with a weak and embryonic sense of belonging to the profession of teaching. They have a more limited sense of belonging to the specific school community in which they are to teach. As inexperienced outsiders, first year teachers are not likely to possess an understanding of the attitudes, opinions, expectations, values, and roles of the specific professional work community they are entering.

First year teachers lack understanding of how their specific school micro-community functions. Moreover, beginning teachers have little first-hand knowledge of how those within the school perceive that professional micro-community.

Myriad changes and adjustments in relationships with others are expected as the first year teacher interprets and learns about the subtleties of the work setting. In the last half of the school year, first year teachers reported strong positive changes in their relationships with fellow faculty members, students and, to a lesser extent, parents.

In the first half of the school year, first year teachers most frequently mentioned being with students as a source of satisfaction, followed respectively by seeing students learn, and feeling personally successful (Applegate, et al., 1977). In the second half of the year, eight of thirteen teachers expressed positive changes in their relationships with students. While early in the year, first year teachers were most often satisfied simply by being with students, at the close of the year, teachers most frequently reported increased satisfaction from seeing students learn, particularly as a result of their teaching efforts. By the end of the year only a single teacher reported increased satisfaction simply from being with students. Four of the eight teachers reporting positive change in their relationships with students, said they were more relaxed with students, more comfortable in their ability to interact with students. In the second half of the year there was no indication of negative change in relationships with students.

Before school began, first year teachers did not expect to find satisfaction in their relations with fellow teachers, although by November

seven had reported satisfactions from knowing their colleagues (Applegate, et al., 1977). By early spring, however, eight of thirteen first year teachers reported significant positive changes in their relations with fellow teachers. Three teachers expressed this change in terms of increased acceptance by other teachers; of being more socially integrated into the fabric of the faculty life of the school. Three teachers reported that they were more "relaxed" in their relations with their colleagues. Five teachers expressed that they were more secure in staff relations. They had less need for the approval of other teachers. These teachers reported being more confident in their relations with other faculty. They saw themselves as more assertive, and better able to talk with other teachers on an equal footing.

Six of thirteen first year teachers expressed changes in their relations with parents. As with colleagues, in the beginning of the year the first year teachers generally did not expect to find satisfaction from their interactions with parents (Applegate, et al., 1977). By the end of the year, however, three teachers reported that they had become more confident in their ability to interact with parents. They were pleased to find that parents accepted them and seemed to trust them. For three other teachers, however, by early spring parents had become a greater source of difficulty than earlier in the year. One of these teachers reported that it was difficulty to separate the teacher-self from the personal-self when responding to parental complaints and problems.

Supervisory and administrative personnel--principals, department heads, supervisors, and the like--observe teachers as they teach. However, organizational constraints and role differences greatly affect

their relationships with teachers. Principals, as a part of their job, observe first year teachers. Such observations are infrequent at best, and occur as a part of an evaluative function resulting from the bureaucratic and hierarchical nature of schools. At the close of the school year, five of thirteen teachers indicated increased difficulty in their relationship to their principal. Most expressed their concern in relation to evaluation necessary for contract renewal. Though they noted that the principals were "just doing their job," teachers reported an increase in job related anxiety because of such evaluations and observations by administrators.

Organization, planning, and instruction. The process of instruction, planning for instruction, and organization of instructional and clerical responsibilities emerged as a significant source of change in the lives of first year teachers. Change in both positive and negative directions were associated with general and specific aspects of the instructional process-the primary work responsibility of first year teachers. Nine of thirteen teachers reported changes in this salient aspect of their work.

Positive changes in instructional matters were reported by six of the nine teachers. Three of these teachers indicated that they had become more relaxed with the subject matter they taught. Instruction was perceived as easier, requiring less effort. Four of the teachers reporting positive changes explained that they were providing more individual attention to students than they had in the past. They felt they were better meeting the instructional needs of students with problems. There was overall, a general sense of increased skill in presenting material to students, and becoming comfortable with an instructional approach that

seemed "right."

Negative changes in instructional matters were also reported by six of the nine teachers. Three teachers reported greater difficulty in teaching children as individuals with unique problems and learning styles, yet still attaining goals set by the school or school system. Three teachers reported an increasing awareness of specific instructional shortcomings, or a general dissatisfaction with their abilities as a teacher. Three teachers voiced a growing concern with time in relation to the instructional process. These teachers expressed the perception that there was not enough time to do an adequate job of teaching. Professional literature about the first year of teaching echoes this specific perception and generally portrays time in the life of the first year teacher as a negative factor (Johnston, 1978).

Applegate, et al., (1977) found that in the first part of the school year first year teachers were surprised at the amount of time and energy needed for preparing lesson plans, doing paper work, and generally becoming organized to accomplish the tasks expected of them. By early spring of the first year seven of thirteen teachers reported specific changes in their planning for teaching and organization of paperwork.

Only a single teacher reported an increase in the amount and specificity of planning for instruction. It should be noted in this instance the change was in response to specific intervention by the school principal and the school system resource teacher who were both working with the teacher in an effort to remediate what they felt were serious instructional problems.

Three of the teachers reporting changes indicated that they were

spending less time planning than in the begining of the year, and that they were planning in less detail. One of these teachers also indicated that she did not feel as if she was doing as good a job of teaching as she was in the beginning of the year.

Two teachers reported spending less planning time that at the beginning of the year, but explained that it was easier and faster to do the necessary plans. Another teacher reported a conscious effort to spend less time planning for teaching.

Two teachers reported that they had stopped worrying about getting paper work finished. These teachers had adopted a relaxed attitude suggesting that what was not accomplished on one day could always be done on the next.

Three teachers perceived themselves to be more organized than earlier in the school year. They found themselves better able to handle details and managerial tasks more efficiently.

As with the image of time and the first year of teaching, the image of clerical matters at the beginning of the first year of teaching appears to be congruent with the professional literature and conventional wisdom (Johnston, 1978). The professional literature does not, however, reflect changes in beginning teachers' response to planning and clerical matters, nor does it reflect the image presented by beginning teachers sampled in the present study at the end of their first year.

Tolerance and response to student misbehavior. As early as November of the school year, most of the first year teachers indicated that they were changing their behavior in response to what they perceived as inappropriate student behavior (Applegate, et al., 1977). Eight of thirteen

first year teachers expressed continued change in early spring and at the end of the school year in June.

While in the first half of the year Applegate, et al., (1977) observed the direction of change to be consistently toward more controlling relationships with students, such was not the case in the second half of the year.

Three of the eight teachers reporting changes in their response to student misbehavior moved in the direction of less discipline. Two of these teachers had no problem maintaining appropriate student behavior in their classrooms, and were in a position where they could "make a conscious effort to stop hassling the kids." The third teacher experienced considerable difficulty maintaining what she perceived to be appropriate student behavior, and she reported that she had become much more lenient than in the beginning of the school year.

Five first year teachers reported that they had become more strict in their response to what they perceived as inappropriate student behavior. These teachers expressed that they were able to act in a more decisive manner, with an increased sense of security. Not only had these teachers become more strict in their response to student misbehavior ("more likely to paddle"), they had also expanded the domain of student behavior which they considered to be unacceptable.

Four of thirteen first year teachers reported changes in their tolerance of student misbehavior, three indicating that they had become less patient, and one becoming more patient. Each of these teachers also reported changes in their response to student conduct they considered to

be unacceptable. Comparison of the direction of change revealed contradictions. One of the four teachers perceived that he had become less patient since the beginning of the school year and, as expected, perceived that he had set higher standards and become more controlling of student behavior. Two teachers, however, indicated that they had become less patient, but they also indicated that they had become much less strict in their standards of discipline. Similarly, another teacher had become more patient, but had also become more controlling and strict in response to student misbehavior. These inconsistencies are less surprising in light of the fact that the three teachers expressing these perceptions were each experiencing classroom management problems.

As with previous topics, the professional literature tends to mirror Applegate et al., (1977) findings about beginning teachers' experiences with student behavior at the start of the school year. Such an image is less accurate reflection of their experiences toward the end of their first year (Johnston, 1978).

Confidence. First year teachers are marginally prepared to perform their assigned job. They work in isolation from more experienced teachers. They possess a limited knowledge of a low-level professional vocabulary. They are more likely to have greater exposure to evaluative superiors than more experienced teachers. These and other factors contribute to doubts about their own competence. These and other factors challenge the professional self-confidence of beginning teachers, contributing to the gnawing doubt: Can I do the job? Can I teach?

In response to the interview question, "How have you changed?", nine of thirteen first year teachers expressed changes in their confidence in

themselves as teachers. Only one of these nine teachers felt less confident in his ability to teach at the end of the year than he had when the year began. Generally, the other eight teachers reported increased confidence stemming from a better sence of what the job entails, what is expected. Some teachers attributed their increased sense of confidence to the experienced bained over the course of the year. Still others expressed that they felt more secure by the end of the year. Some teachers reported that the increased sense of professional confidence had carried over into their personal lives. They felt more secure, self-confident, "More independent and grown up as a person." Teachers reported that they were no longer afraid and unsure of their ability to teach.

The changes, new experiences, and unfamiliar situations in the professional and personal lives of first year teachers are likely to produce varying degrees of tension, anxiety, stress and, for some few, exhiliaration. The fear, worries, and concerns of the beginning of the year (Applegate, et al., 1977) began to give way to a greater sense of relaxation and comfort with the demands of teaching as the end of the first year approached. Six of thirteen teachers expressed perceptions of being more relaxed, more comfortable. By early spring they no longer felt "new." They were less nervous and apprensive, more calm than they had been in September. They were more comfortable with the job. For these teachers, the challenge of the first year of teaching had been met

Conclusion

When asked how they had changed since the beginning of the school year, first year teachers responded with a surprising similarity. In contrast, responses to interview questions early in the school year

displayed more variance than at the end of the year. By the close of school, the extent of similar response was so great that many teachers used identical words and phrases to describe the ways they had changed.

The focus of beginning teachers' perceptions of how they had changed seemed to merge on their primary responsibility: the act of teaching. From the start of the year their perceived satisfactions with students changed from simply being with students, to seeing students learn as a result of their teaching. Planning for instruction has become easier and by the end of the year was being dispatched with increased efficiency. In the last months of school, first year teachers were more comfortable and relaxed with subject matter and the instructional process. As a result, they were increasingly able to turn their attentions to the instructional needs of students as individuals.

First year teachers found they were no longer strangers in their schools. They discovered they were developing legitimate professional identities of their own. They found that they were more accepted by fellow teachers, and felt they had become a part of the school culture.

Most importantly, the beginning teachers expressed a growing sense of confidence in themselves as mature, capable professionals. They found themselves more confident in their managerial relations with students. They felt they could express their own ideas, and could question the ideas of others. There was a growing sense of affirmation: I can teach.

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